

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 APRIL 2024

REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ELECTIONS

A.1 WORK PROGRAMMING – INCLUDING MONITORING OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY OF FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

(Report prepared by Keith Durran)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The report provides the Committee with an update on its approved Work Programme for 2023/24 (including progress with enquiries set out in its Work Programme), feedback to the Committee on the decisions in respect of previous recommendations from the Committee in respects of enquiries undertaken and a list of forthcoming decisions for which notice has been given since publication of the agenda for the Committee's last meeting.

INVITEES

None.

BACKGROUND

The Council commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to undertake an 'Overview & Scrutiny Development Review' in 2021 as a way of further improving that function at the Council. Two relevant recommendations arising from that review were:

“Further strengthening the annual process for developing work programmes for each O&S committee - Engaging Members, Officers, partners and the public to prioritise the topics for review. This could include a selection criteria to identify appropriate topics for the work programme. Currently the work programme is also the last item on the agenda at O&S meetings, we would recommend bringing it to the beginning, so it can be given greater priority and benefit from more considered discussion, rather than being subject to the inevitable end of meeting fatigue.

Reviewing how the recommendations are made and how impact is measured – This could include putting the 'recommendations monitoring report' at the beginning of agendas to orientate O&S towards outcomes-focused meetings, alongside an emphasis on finding strong recommendations from questioning to present to Cabinet (or partners) as improvement or challenge proposals.

The inclusion of the matters set out in the “purpose of this report” section above seeks to further re-inforce the inter-relationship of the matters referred to. As such, it is designed to further support consideration of work programming of the Committee and contribute to addressing progress with the Corporate Plan.

DETAILED INFORMATION

WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The detailed matters relating to the following matters are set out in the relevant Appendix identified:

- (1) Work Programme for 2023/24 – See Appendix A;
- (2) feedback to the Committee on the decisions in respect of previous recommendations from the Committee in respects of enquiries undertaken – see Appendix B; and
- (3) a list of forthcoming decisions for which notice has been given since publication of the agenda for the Committee’s last meeting – See Appendix C.

In considering work programming matters, the Committee is further reminded of the other recommendations from the CfGS review undertaken in 2021:

*“**Considering greater use of task and finish groups** – This more informal type of O&S can allow improved cross-party working and detailed investigation of a single issue focussed on producing substantive recommendations.*

***Improved agenda planning and management** - Committees should focus on one or two substantive items per agenda to allow for cross-cutting themes to be properly identified and explored, and different insights brought to bear on critical issues.*

***Considering how to engage the public in the work of O&S** - This could include O&S going on more site visits in the community, inviting the public to offer ideas for work programmes, and greater use of social media channels for resident input and communicating the progress and impact of scrutiny work.*

***A clearer focus on democratic accountability** - Scrutiny of Cabinet Members should form a key part of the work programme, providing an opportunity to hold the Leader and portfolio holders to account for delivery of the corporate plan and any other issues O&S feel is important.”*

The Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee is one of two overview and scrutiny committees established by the Council to specifically focus on the following areas of Council work (as detailed in Article 6.02(i) of the Council’s Constitution):

“To perform the role of Overview and Scrutiny and its functions in relation to:

- *Community Safety*
- *Health and Well-being*
- *Economy, Skills and Educational Attainment*

- *Community engagement, development and empowerment*
- *Economic Development, Regeneration and Freeport East*
- *Leisure and Tourism (except matters relating to budgets)*
- *Planning & Building Control and Strategic Planning (including the Local Plan)*
- *Emergency Planning*
- *To scrutinize/review the outcomes and implications for the Council of its financial support to community organisations and also from its receipt and use of funds received from local partner organisations*

The Community Leadership Overview & Scrutiny Committee will also act as the Council's designated "crime and disorder committee" for the purposes of Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and will have the power –

- a) *to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities[*] of their crime and disorder function;*
- b) *to make reports or recommendations to the local authority with respect to the discharge of those functions.*

The Constitution provides for the two overview and scrutiny committees to submit a work programme to full Council for approval. Rule 7 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules sets out the position as follows:

"Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will submit a work programme for the year ahead and a review of the previous year's activities to the full Council for approval. In addition it will be responsible for co-ordinating and prioritising its work programme on an ongoing basis.

In preparing, co-ordinating and prioritising its programme, each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will take into account:-

- *The General Role and Principles of undertaking its functions, as set out in Part 2 Article 6;*
- *The planned work on the preparation of elements of the Budget and Policy Framework, as set out in the Council's Business Plan;*
- *The need for statutory timetables to be met;*
- *The wishes of all members of the committee;*
- *Requests from the Cabinet to carry out reviews; and*
- *Requests from Group Leaders in accordance with Rule 8."*

In considering the Work Programme of enquiries, the Committee must have regard to the Corporate Plan 2024-28 and the themes of that Corporate Plan are:

- Pride in our area and services to residents
- Raising aspirations and creating opportunities
- Championing our local environment
- Working with partners to improve quality of life
- Promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer
- Financial Sustainability and openness

In respect of the collaborative working with The Cabinet as part of the governance arrangements at this Council a meeting was held with the Leader and Deputy leader (and the Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 April 2024. A number of suggestions for enquires in 2024/25 were discussed.

The meeting also considered the timing and arrangements for reviewing voluntary sector/community group funding by the Council The outcome of this meeting was a recommendation to discontinue the review commenced by this Committee as Cabinet itself was overseeing the same process directly over a shorter timeframe and, as such, this Committees review (through its Working Group) would involve duplication of Council resources. This matter was being considered by Cabinet on 19 April and "is addressed" in

recommendations above.

The Committee should be aware, that at present the Democratic Services Team have launched a public consultation with the aim to capture the residents' ideas as to what they think both Overview and Scrutiny Committees should be undertaking in its enquires for 2024/25. The Consultation is set to end on 10 May 2024 (Appendix D). Arrangements will be made for meetings to consider proposals from the public, Town and Parish Councils, other partner organisations and Councillors and staff for enquires to be undertaken in 2024/25 (ahead of the next formal meeting of the Committee).

The Democratic Services Team have also commenced discussions with both the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees into the Scrutiny Annual Report for the year 2023/24.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee considers and notes the progress with enquiries set out in its Work Programme 2023/24, feedback to the Committee on the decisions in respect of previous recommendations and the list of forthcoming decisions.